13. BERTA LEXICON

M. Lionel Bender

1. Background

Although great progress has been made in Nilo-Saharan studies since mid-century when Greenberg began his break-through classificatory work, there are still many neglected languages and branches. One of these is Berta. The sketchy grammatical description of Triulzi, Atieb, and Bender (1976b) includes a thorough bibliography on Berta studies (supplied mainly by Triulzi; see pp. 517-520, 532). It includes about 38 items; I know of nothing to add in the linguistic area since that time. Most of the same references can be found in one convenient listing in Triulzi, Atieb, and Bender (1976a), a slightly different version of the above-mentioned chapter. For this reason, it seems appropriate to me to make available the lexical data I collected with Atieb Ahmed Dafallah in Ethiopia (mainly in 1974) and by myself in Sudan in 1978-9, and some additional data collected by others recently. I will not attempt to reprint older items collected by Cailliaud, Evans-Pritchard, etc., [1] except in a few cases where new information is thus made available. Nor will I attempt to prepare a Berta-English lexicon at this time (time and space considerations preclude it). The present list is intended for the English-reading scholar who is interested in Berta lexicon: it contains about 1000 items.

In the following list, varieties of Berta are identified as follows (all collected by the author and Atieb unless otherwise specified):

U: Undu (lit. "mouth, language"), the "pure" rural Berta which has been less influenced by Arabic; found in the area north of Asosa, western Wellegga Province, Ethiopia.

M: Mayu, the Arabized Berta of town-dwellers around Asosa.

F: Fadasi, the Berta of the Bambeshi (Fadasi) area, southeast of Asosa; supplemented by material collected by Atieb on his own.

S: Sudan, collected in Khartoum (Xartum) from a speaker of the Jebel Ura area, near Kurmuk. Numerals collected at Jurut, near Kurmuk (all this material collected by author alone).

G_1: Gebeto of the Diddesa bridge area, western Wellegga, collected by Harold Fleming in the 1960's.

G_2: Gebeto of same area as above (Dimtu village, at Diddesa bridge on Leqemt-Gimbi road forty kms. west of Gimbi, 1974).

J: Sudan, collected by Samia Al Azharia Jahn in the 1970's; her main concern was with ritual and ethnomusic.

C: Cerulli 1947, citing his own data collected in Asosa area in 1928 and data of Evans-Pritchard, Marno, Halévy, d'Abbadie, Tutscheck, and Cailliaud.

R: Roseires, Blue Nile Province, western Sudan, elicited from students in 1978-9.

W: "Wetawit" of Kobor, south of Asosa, collected by Fleming in the 1960's (only where significantly different from my own data).

Further details on most of these varieties is found in either of the 1976 articles.

2. Transcription and abbreviations

Segmental phonemes are as in the previous articles except for a few substitutions (namely, ɗ for D, VV for V:).

p'				k'	ʔ			
b		d	j	g				
m_b		n_d		$ŋ_g$				
		ɗ				i, ii		u, uu
f	θ	s	š			e, ee		o, oo
		z (M)					a, aa	
		s'					ai	
m		n	ɲ (M)	ŋ (U, F)				
		l, r						
w			y		h			

Lax vowels are not distinctive, but will be indicated where noticeable (ɪ, ɛ, ə, ɔ, ʊ). Consonant variants are also shown, e.g. $ŋ^y$ f : ŋ before front vowels, ɸ, β for f, etc.

Suprasegmentals (in addition to consonant and vowel length shown by doubling) include low tone (unmarked since by far the more frequent), high tone (shown by ´ on vowel symbol), and stress (shown by ' before syllable). No convincing evidence for mid-tone has been found, but falling tone probably does occur, at least word-finally (see same remark for Kunama, this volume).

Frequent dialect correspondences:

U	F	M
p'	p'	b

s	s	z
g	g	j
ŋ	ŋ	ɲ
u	o	u

Plurals of nouns are not shown. Note that mass nouns (sand, water, etc.) generally do not have plurals. For other nouns, those ending in a consonant usually suffix -i for plural. Others may replace singular vowel by -e, make no change, or undergo a form of "ablaut" (see Triulzi, Atieb, Bender 1976a: 523-4).

Note that the following are gathered under inclusive headings so that individual terms such as "father, one, I" will be found only under the headings KIN TERMS, NUMERALS (including ordinals), PRONOUNS, respectively.

ABBREVIATIONS

aj.: adjective
Amh.: Amharic
Ar.: Arabic
aux.: auxiliary
av.: adverb
cf.: compare
cnj.: conjunction
def.: definite
dem.: demonstrative
Engl.: English
FB: father's brother
FBS: father's brother's spouse
FS: father's sister
impv.: imperative
i.v.: intransitive verb
LRP: Linguistic Resource Person (informant)
MB: nother's brother
MS: mother's sister
n.: noun
Om.: Omotic
opp.: opposite
Or.: Oromo
q.v.: which see
rel.: relative
Sem.: Semitic
t.v.: transitive verb
v.: vide = "see"
var.: variety
vb.: verb
voc.: vocative
yr.: year
/ used to separate sg. and pl. of nouns where given
-- could not be elicited (unknown to LRP's)

A

a, an — (no indefinite article in Berta; use "one")

aardvaark — F: doroŋ (?); dawa
cf. "mole"

abdomen — = belly

absent — S: šaari

add — U: lɔ (in numeral compounds)

after — v. "then"

afternoon — U,M,F: huruŋ-huruŋ

alive — U,F: síi M: zíi

all — U,M,F: k'ɪ́llíŋ
S: kɪllí (?)
G_2: dugura; gʊle
cf. "many"

allow — v. "leave"

always — S: məndə́n; ta'waali (Ar.)

and — U,S: u

angry — v. "quarrel"

animal — F: binensa (Or.)
G_1: kunte (cf. "antelope")

,carnivorous — U,M,F: nʊgu'ra
cf. "leopard, lion"

,domestic — U,F: gíŋ-θáayu
M: jíŋ-'θáayu
"thing-home"
G_2: giŋ-šulu
"thing-house"

,wild — U,F,G_1: gíŋ-ŋʸeeró
jíŋ-'ɲeeró
"thing-forest"

ankle — U,M,F: gólɔ's'iŋ

answer — v.: "say"

ant — U,F: gamadu
M: gamuduŋ
F: "small, black": pišu

,black or red — U,M,F: s'ós'o
(from which às'óos'o, "Asosa")

antelope — U,F,M: bɔrɔɔs'
G_1: bobolo?("bushbuck")
F: general: mugu
vars.: Bihor reedbuck, Grant's gazelle: donsi
bushbuck: abuŋ
bush duiker: k'ont'e
dikdik, hartebeest, Klipspringer: mugu
oribi: bicɛ
oryx: bohos'

anus — v. "buttock"

Arab — C: bagaro (from Sudanese "Baggara")

arm — S: buá; v. also "wing"

,lower — U,M,F: θabáare (= "hand-eye"?)

,upper — = wing

arrive — S: wəsalái (Ar.)

arrow — G_1: joga

ascend, climb, go up, ride — U,M,F: haa

ashes — U,M,F,S: bub(u)'da
G_2: hu(h)ula

ask — U,M,F: ɗɔ'k'ɔ θa

Asosa — v. "ant, black or red"

ass, wild v. "donkey"

at, in, to U,F,M: θa, θɛ; G_2: li

at once = immediately

ax U: dɔŋ

B

baboon F: dwaš̌

baby v.: "child"

back U,M,F: gundi

in back of, behind
U: θa...gundi
("at...back")

bad, ugly, wrong
U,M,F: dɔgɔši
M: also: šúní (Ar.)
G_2: dagɔsi; dɛnde

bamboo: J: gagu

banana U,F: almoos (Ar.)
M: almooz (Ar.)
G_1: "sweet": wuda

bank (of river): U,F: bul guugu
M: θele gugu,
tele gugu

baobab fruit J: dalu

bark of tree: U,F: faašu
M: fahašu
G_2: hohaasa

barley C: algʸmene (Ar.);
huud

bathe = wash

baton, vars. J: kasibal "cow or gazelle horn" or "boar tooth"
"bent stick": baŋ
"ebony baton": tari
others: adoclo, keŋal

be, be in a place v. COPULAS

bean U,M,F: ɔ'fé2
F: var.: ɗɔ́bári

bear (child), lay (egg)
J: k'wɔ́la, wala

beard C: addiyin (Ar.); mbu

beat (vb.) S: šɛguθái
v. also "hit"

beautiful = fine

because U,M,F: šaa-, šɛ-
M: also 2ašan (Ar.)
S: ašán-

become (use "go" as aux.)

bad U,F: məngifa
M: manjifa (Ar.)

=bug F: gus'i
F: gus'i

bee F: ŋonšo
"Queen-bee": bolo-bolo

beer G_1: baaca

beetle F: biiru; bombi

before, earlier, formerly
U,M,F: mbá-gábúlu
"this-before"
Ar.
S: gəblə mbɛle
"before-this"
Ar.
v. also "front"

behind v. "back"

belly, abdomen, stomach
U,M: iyú(u) F: iyɔ́
G_2: io

below, beneath = under

Berta v. "slave"

language v. "mouth"

better U: gɔn

between U: θɛ..niin-iyu
"at.. ? belly"

big, large U: 'ɗúúɲi, ɗɛɲi
M: 'ɗáaɲí F: ɗɔ́ɔɲí
G_2: ɗuɲa

bird U,M,F: bɛɛgúu (said to mean: "cries guu")
S: miis'é
G_1: mic'ɛ (2)
G_2: beego, biago; mic'e
v. also "chicken"

var. J: Šindoge ("black, small, dancing")
F: Or. hada bofa: agage

bite (vb.) U,F: p'íiɗa
M,S: bíiɗa
G_2: k'ɔra

black U,M: miilí
F: mɛlé
G_1: mili G_2: mile

person U,M: 'gáa-milí
F: gáa-mɛlé
(from which: "Gamila" as name of people)

blood U,M,F,J: k'ápa
G_1: kawa G_2: k'awa

,menstrual F: k'aralo

blow (vb.) U,M,F,S: fúlá

blue U,M,F: milé-k'aridí
"black- ? "

Blue ..le G_1: dallit = Diddesa

boar, wild v. "hog"

boat U,M,F: k'urfée

body U,M,F: bus'(u)k'e
S: buske

bone U,M,F,G_2: k'aara
(also "horn of giraffe")

both usu. = "two"

bottle U,F: algasáasa (Ar.)
M: algazáaza

bottom (of) U: θa...ihu
"at...foot"
cf. "under"

bow (and arrow) G_1: lia, tia

boy F: guθi
G_1: indɛ-bɪɗulɛ
"person-?-male"
J: boɲor ("small boy")
cf. Gaam buɲur
v. "child" under KIN

branch U: s'is'i -buwa
"tree-wing"
v. also "baton"

bread U,M,F: p'ɛŋp'él

break (vb.) S: fəše ("b. bowl or cup"); kʊla, k'ʊla, (g)ola

breast

,female = milk U,M,F: ɪrr
G_2: eeri

male U,M,F: fɪš(ɪh)ɔŋ
(< bɪš, "heart"?)

breathe v. "exhale, inhale"

bride J: hauwa ("small b.")

bridge of nose F: amúŋ-k'aara
"nose-bone"

bring S: hádò (caus. of "go"?)

brown v. "yellow"

buffalo F: dariu
G_1: daru, deru

build v. "do"

bull, castrated U,M,F: abəjia
non-castrated U,M,F: bɔɗɔ
C: budu

burn U,M,F: daara; θúus'á "ignite"
S: i.v.: dɛri; θúus'a "ignite, kindle, light"
G_2: taara

bush (wilderness) U,M: šuŋp'ul
F: šɔŋp'ɔl

but all: la'kin (Ar.) = "if"

butter v. "fat (n.)"

-fly v. "fly (n.)"

buttock all: iŋ
C: in "anus"

buy S: šib(i)la cf. "sell"

buzzard F: šegot

by (agentive) U: $ŋ^{y}$in
C

calabash G_1: ago
J: ago (Lagenaria sp., small one used for "water drum")
"clapper, rattle": (a)seisaru; seisok ("another var., filled with lubia seeds")
v. also "gourd"

call S: s'olí
v. also "chief, name"

caracal F: anzama; digilgole
cf. "hyena"

care(fulness) = wisdom

carry v. "take"

cat U,M,F,S: mɛ́rú(ʔ)

,wild F: mariu-abense

catch, hold S: múuɲa

caterpillar F: ababone

cease v. "leave"

chair, saddle U,M,F: amədíʔ; bə́mbər (Ar.) "chair"

chameleon F: lafiŋšo, θafiŋšo

cheek U,M: ile-hu = "ear-
F: ile-ho "foot"

cheese U,M,F: arúfəŋ

chest (of body) U,M,F: biš-are "heart-eye"
G_2: bisi
v. also "breast"

cheetah F: dohol

chick U,M,F: p'ip'io

chicken, fowl U,M,F,S: mis'é
G_1: mice (cf. "bird")

chickpeas G_1: abábere

chief, king U,M,F: agúr (< "pull", q.v.); al-mugɛ́dɛŋ, al-mugɛ́dɛm (Ar.)
U,F: maaba-p'əhi "man-calls (on the people)"

chigger F: mojere (cf. Amh. moyale)

child v. KIN TERMS

childhood U: gɛd-ɪndu "child-mouth"

chin U,M,F: šəgɔrḍe

chop (vb.) S: k'éera (= "cut" ?)

cigarette S: sijar(a) (Ar.)

civet cat F: nagura-ŋon-iŋ (cf. "leopard")

claw, nail U: maašu
G_1: mašišu2
G_2: məsiso
C: maašoo; θaba-buš "hand-hair"

clean (aj.) U,F: s'ɛ́rí
M: s'árí

(vb.) v. "wipe"

climb = ascend

close = shut

close by v. "near"

clothes U,M,F: òr

cloud U,M,F,G_2: a'gúru
G_1: daguru

cock, rooster: U,M,F: hɔŋhɔŋ

coffee U,M,F: albuŋ (Ar.)

coins = gold

cold U,F: ɖɛší, ɖaaší
M: ɖɛší G_1: ɖase
G_2: disa

Fadasi = fàa-ɖaaší "people-cold (river)"

Colobus = gureza, v. "monkey"

come U: ádɔ/'saawɔθa
M: ádɔ/'zaawɔθa
F: duo/'duuwɔθa
S: a'dó/a'dóθa
G_2: ado/duala

-down v. "descend"
-in v. "enter"
-out v. "exit"
-up v. "ascend"

conflict, intertribal J: murke ("killing people or raiding cattle") v. also "war"

conversation v. "story"

converse (vb.) v. "say, speak"

cook, roast U,M,F: məŋ-θɪŋa "cook-food"
S: gia-θiŋθiŋ "make-food"

COPULAS U: equative, attributive: ø, ma; be in a place, be present, "there is": si(k')~si2~zi-; have, own, possess: gíida

U,M,F: exist; ɖaaša dwell, live, reside: gú(u)da

corn = maize

correct = good

cough S: n.: k'ok'oya
vb.: hohoŋa

count (vb.) U,M,F: íina
U: o'lóʔi
M: 'hássaba
S: hásəbə (Ar.)

country U,F: heesa
F,M: heeza
U,M.F: ádár (Ar.)

cow, ox U,M,F: θaŋ
F,G_1,G_2: ła(a)ŋ

crocodile U,F: aŋk'arum
M: feθo
G_1: nagu (Or.?)

crooked, curved U,M,F: gólí

crop, grain, harvest U,F: ʃíli
M: zíli

crow (n.) F: k'oro

cry (vb.) U,M,F: bíya
S: béi/bíyɛ́θa
U: n.: bebée
S: n.: hɔ́rɔ́gi
v. also "bird"

cultivate v. "dig (with hoe)"

curse, insult S: bɔ́ʃ́-

curved = crooked

cut, rip, saw, split
U,M,F: 'k'íira "cut hard substance"
'k'íiθa "cut soft substance"
S: keθá "saw"
s'éerə "rip, split"
G_2: k'ila
v. also "chop, pour, scythe"

D

dance, play U,M,F,S: íila
v. also "swim"

dark U: milɛŋgi
F: milɛnji
M: milaŋji
cf. "black"

day U,F: mɔsɔɔyu
M: muŋ'zuyu
"sun-belly"

day-names (Arabic names used)

dead, death v. "die"

deep U,M,F: p'íliyu
" ? -belly" (?)

descend, go down U,M,F: buθá(?)

Diddesa (same name as for Blue Nile, q.v.)

diə, bə dəəd U,M,F,S: múʃ́a
G_2: musɛ

death U: muʃ́e(?)
S: múúʃ́ei
F: moʃ́e

dig U,M,F: fuuda
S: húda
U: with hoe: p'ala

dirty U,M,F: dɪdí

disease of skin J: cereŋgereŋ
(severe with putrefying)

dish U,M: gə́i
F: 'gihe?

dislike = hate

dive = fall

divide S: ɣɛssɛmɛ (Ar.)

divorce v. "leave, untie"

do, build, forge, make, prepare, work
U,M,F: hadame
U: 'gíiya M: jíya
F: gaa S: gi(a)
G_2: kiyɛ

dog U,M: gəli/geelí
F: gɛl /geelí, jel
G_2: gɛle, gɛli
S: g(ʷ)éli?

,hunting F: agwe

donkey U,M,F,G_2: ʃiŋir
G_1: siŋir, ʃínorre

,wild F: ʃiŋira-ŋero
"donkey-forest"

door(way) U,M,F,S: háŋduŋ

dove F: gurgudu

down, low U: bʊlu

dress (n.) S: níiʃ́a

Topics in Nilo-Saharan Linguistics

Edited by
M. Lionel Bender

CIP-Titelaufnahme der Deutschen Bibliothek

Topics in Nilo-Saharan linguistics / ed. by M. Lionel Bender.
- Hamburg : Buske, 1989
(Nilo-Saharan ; Vol. 3)
ISBN 3-87118-927-8
NE: Bender, M. Lionel [Hrsg.]; GT

ISBN 3-87118-927-8 (NISA 3)
ISSN 0932-1993 (NILO-SAHARAN)
All rights reserved

HELMUT BUSKE VERLAG HAMBURG